

Over 350,000 veterans are currently receiving VA benefits for PTSD & TBI

Washington, DC –Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) today entered the following Floor Statement into the Congressional Record to commemorate Veterans Day and advocate for a greater national investment in research and treatment of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI):

Madame Speaker, I rise today to commemorate Veterans Day and applaud the commitment and work of this Congress and President Obama to meet the needs of America's 23.4 million military veterans. Nearly 400,000 veterans call the great state of Minnesota home and we are proud of them, our friends and neighbors. As a Member of Congress and the daughter of a World War II veteran, I believe I have a duty to honor the men and women who have so courageously served our country by investing in expanding educational opportunities, health care services, and access to good jobs for our nation's veterans.

Increasingly, I have become particularly concerned about the mental health issues, such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI), that afflict our warriors who are now home from Iraq and Afghanistan. PTSD and TBI have claimed too many lives and caused too much hardship among the families of veterans. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, service members responding to mental health questions when they return from Iraq and Afghanistan show that about 19% of service members from Iraq have a mental health problem, while about 11% from Afghanistan have a mental health problem. Too often the unseen wounds suffered by veterans, as a result of PTSD and TBI, remain untreated until a crisis or tragedy occurs for the veteran or their loved ones. Illnesses related to substance abuse, suicide prevention, and homelessness prevention for our veterans are often directly related to psychological trauma. I believe it is critical to support the expanded efforts by the

Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure our soldiers understand clearly that mental health services and help are available if, and when, they need them.

On this Veterans Day, I am very proud to live in a country that so values its veterans. My commitment and my prayers are with the millions of veterans and their families who we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations & Budget Committees.

###